

## HOW WELL DO ADVERTORIALS WORK?

Many marketers favor so-called “advertorials” that allow their messages—often including specific descriptions of product use, visual displays, etc.—to run in editorial content directly related to their product category. The assumption is that appearing in such editorially-linked environments is more effective than a traditional ad randomly placed within a magazine issue. But is there any hard evidence to support this?

According to Affinity, LLC.’s VISTA Print Effectiveness Rating Service, which measures editorial readership and advertising impact in a large number of publications, on average, advertorials *do not* outperform other ads in an issue. As shown in the accompanying table, regular feature articles garner a 54% readership, while advertorials are read by only 46% of issue audiences. Paralleling this, a typical ad in a regular editorial feature is recalled by 46% of an issue’s readers, while only 42% remember seeing an advertorial.

Obviously averages can be misleading, and VISTA’s normative findings do not necessarily indicate that advertorials are a bad idea. A mitigating factor may be the kinds of advertisers who use advertorials—do they tend to be for sub-par ad recall product classes, especially those with lower incidence of usage? This may explain the disparity indicated in the initial VISTA analysis. Ideally, we would like to see a controlled study with the same brand appearing in both situations, rather than using mass-of-data averages to draw conclusions. Nevertheless, Affinity, LLC.’s VISTA service should encourage advertorial fanciers to back up their conviction that this ploy works with tangible research, rather than accepting the premise as an act of faith. ■

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*How Well Do Advertorials Work? Continued*

## AVERAGE READER RESPONSE TO REGULAR EDITORIAL AND ADVERTORIAL FEATURES

	REGULAR EDITORIAL FEATURE ARTICLE	ADVERTORIALS
Read/Looked Into Article	54%	47%
Read More Than Half Of Article	36	32
Average Ad Recall	46	42
Correct Brand Association With Ad	38	34
Took Action After Seeing Ad	23	21

*Source: Affinity, LLC. VISTA Print Effectiveness Rating Service Database, as reported in Fine Print newsletter, Vol. II, 2004.*